

The History and Archaeology of Medieval Ireland: Trim and the Blackfriary

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STEP Project Category: Education Abroad
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Favorite Memory:

I have two favorite memories. One academic, one cultural. My academic favorite memory was using a total station. Total stations are surveying tools that give you not only coordinates, but also depth and other measurements of a location. I loved the intricacies of the tool and found the mathematical/scientific methods behind it very interesting. By the end of our program I was the one teaching other students how to use it and was nicknamed “Queen of the total station.” My cultural favorite memory was going to the local pubs in Trim, and having our group take up almost the entire place. We sat around, talked, played euchre, and sipped cider and Guinness. Over one month we became very close with each other, and even a few of the pub owners. One night we were able to attend a traditional music night at one of the pubs, and it was truly a highlight of the trip.



(Upper Left)
Myself and other students with the total station

(Right)
Our group, including Blackfriary interns

(Lower Left)
Labeled map of Ireland



Project Description:

The History and Archaeology of Medieval Ireland: Trim and the Blackfriary allows students to participate in an archaeological dig, through the Blackfriary Field School. We had the chance to work with career archaeologists and continue their excavation of a Medieval monastery, known as the Blackfriary. Our group was able to open two new cuttings for their digging season and to begin digging in where they believe the altar and chancel were, in the original structure. We also had the chance to travel to other Medieval monasteries that are still standing and visit many other Medieval ruins and towns.

Why Did I Select This Project?

I selected this project because I have always wanted to travel to Ireland and the archaeological aspect made it a truly unique program. I also wanted to be able to learn more about Medieval Europe, and this course did exactly that.



(Left)
Survivors of cutting 16, including Laura, our supervisor



(Right)
Cutting 16, aka the best cutting.

(Left)
“The pit” end of cutting 16



What Was Transformational About My Project?

This project was so far out of my comfort zone that it forced me to do things I never thought were possible. The hours of intense digging we did every day showed me there is so much more to learning than sitting in a classroom. Linguistics, biology, and math majors can all be archaeologists, and become great friends. This project also allowed me to create relationships with our Resident Directors, Dr. Alison Beach and Melissa Clark. These two individuals were there every step of the way, along with the amazing field school employees. Each and every one of them made an impact on me that I will never forget.



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